



# Transactional Writing: Argument

LEVEL 1i 1ii 1iii 2 3 4 5

## Bees Should Go to School

### THE LEARNING CONTEXT

The teacher read “Animals Say” (Heinemann Reader) to her class. This describes a range of imaginary problems that animals might have to face, such as a baby kangaroo falling out of the pouch when its mother is hopping.

As a class, the students had to choose one of these problems and ask:

- What is the problem?
- What is my opinion about it?
- What are some reasons for my opinion?
- What should be done?

This was discussed, with the students illustrating their suggested solutions.

They then brainstormed a list of animals, and had to think of a problem an animal might encounter – for instance, a bee having to learn not to sting people. They also had to think of a solution. Following this, they talked with a buddy about the problem and the solution.

During this time, the teacher modelled how to write a sentence describing a problem and a solution. Her sentence began, “In my opinion ...” The students had already met this argument structure in the “Animals Say” text.

They were then asked to draft their sentences using this model, edit it with the teacher, and finally publish it on the computer.

### Teacher-student conversations

After Kyle had read his draft to the teacher:

- Teacher: I love your idea. Why do you think bees sting people?  
 Kyle: Um, I don't know ... maybe because they're scared of getting squashed.  
 Teacher: You could be right. I wonder how hard it would be to teach bees.  
 Teacher: Have a look at the word “opinion”.  
 Kyle: Have I spelt it wrong?  
 Teacher: How can we check?  
 Kyle: It's in the story on the wall. I'll go and fix it.  
 Teacher: You had a good try first – well done!

Following the second conversation, Kyle corrected his work.

### INTEGRATING READING AND WRITING

Opportunities should be sought in classroom reading programmes for students to respond to the persuasive writing of others. They need to read or be read to, and ask themselves whether they have been persuaded and why.

The “reading to” programme is an opportunity for discussing ideas and reasoning, which may be transferred to writing. The text “Animals Say” could be used well for this purpose.

### WHERE TO NEXT?

To move Kyle towards the next learning step, the teacher might help him to focus on:

Ideas

- extending thinking so that he can provide three or four reasons.

Sentences

- breaking a long sentence into two short ones
- not repeating phrases (“so that”).

Proofreading

- underlining possible mistakes before coming to the teacher
- using classroom resources to correct spelling.

This could be done through:

- modelling of writing, particularly argument writing, to develop understanding and practice
- regular conferencing the instructional reading programme, including reading to students, where they are guided to discuss statements and reasons in stories.

### CURRICULUM LINKS

*English in the New Zealand Curriculum*

#### Level 1: Writing Functions

**Transactional Writing:** Students should write instructions and recount events in authentic contexts.

#### Levels 1 and 2: Reading and Writing Processes

**Exploring Language:** Students should explore choices made by writers, and identify and use the common conventions of writing and organisation of text that affect understanding.

**Thinking Critically:** Students should identify and express meanings in written texts, drawing on personal background, knowledge and experience.

*English in the New Zealand Curriculum, pages 35-36*

### REFERENCE

Ministry of Education. (1994). *English in the New Zealand Curriculum*. Wellington: Learning Media.



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**WHAT THE WORK SHOWS:** Kyle supports a definite opinion with an original, humorous, but seemingly logical reason. He has cleverly linked this reason to his own experience of school.

Student's first draft

### Deeper features

#### Ideas

Conveys an opinion.

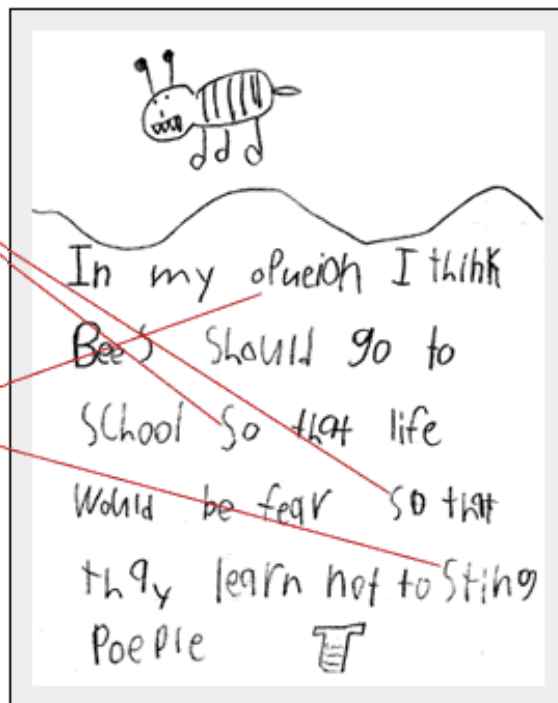
Forms and writes ideas with some reasoning.

#### Sentences

Attempts a compound sentence with some success.

#### Vocabulary

Attempts some content and high-frequency words.



[In my opinion I think bees should go to school so that life would be fair so that they learn not to sting people.]

### Surface features

#### Grammar

Pays careful attention to word order.

#### Punctuation

Demonstrates some understanding of capital letters.

#### Spelling

Able to identify and record most dominant sounds, especially consonants.

#### Layout

Leaves space between words.



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## Bees Should Go to School

Student's first draft



In my opueion I think  
Bee S should go to  
School so that life  
would be fear so that  
they learn not to sting  
Peopie

